2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

The above case illustrates how it was possible for a man, in spite of a poor start in life, to rise. Children were instructed by their elders, as was Thick by his maternal uncle: "Above all things try to have horses. Try to have property and whatever you have, take care of it. By having lots of horses and property, people will respect you and look upon you as somebody."

Again Coming Daylight stated: "They used to think more of horses than of anything else. They were sure proud of owning a pinto pony. In telling stories when they wanted to describe the best they could think of they would say: 'You should have seen her horse—it was a big pinto pony.'" And in telling of a relative of hers, Woman Chief, Coming Daylight said: "Her husband was not very handsome, but they were well-to-do and she always rode top horses."

While all horses were as a rule well cared for, special attention was devoted to the buffalo horses. On the hunt, for instance, these horses would be led along unburdened by pack or rider to keep them fresh. They were ridden only for the actual chase and after the kill were turned loose to roll around and graze like young colts. When the butchering was completed the meat was packed on other horses and the swift buffalo horses were then led home again. These horses were ridden on social and ceremonial occasions, when their owners wished to show off, and of course the soldier societies were well mounted, but such use amounted to no more than a good work-out, and these valuable horses were never abused nor wilfully exhausted.

Children were exhorted to take care of their property, especially of horses, and the girls were advised that "a mare is worth everything—it increases—treat her well." It was stated that some attention was given to breeding. A man might judge that a colt showed possibilities of becoming a fast horse. If it fulfilled the early promise the colts it sired would be watched. The less likely of these would be castrated. Likewise, a good mare would, if possible, be retained by the owner for breeding. A man who owned a particularly good buffalo horse might, on his deathbed, either order that it be killed at his grave or give it to some relative he knew cared well for horses, with instructions never to abuse it nor give it away.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

woman! You are leaving an old woman!' Finally our mother couldn't stand it any longer and, although she was not responsible for that old woman, she turned back and got the old woman to camp by letting her hang onto the travois. But we didn't have to carry her because she died shortly after that." 888

Takes The Bow mentioned that in the dim past, rather than to go off and leave an aged relative, the Gros Ventres used to ask some outstanding warrior to kill this old person—a father, or mother, or grandparent. This was done in order to get those who were suffering "out of their misery." The relative who took this responsibility would authorize the killer to count coup on the one whom he killed and thus score another mark of distinction for his record.[9] Other Gros Ventres were of the opinion that this type of "mercy killing" was adopted from the Blackfoot and that it was rarely carried out by the Gros Ventres, although admittedly abandonment of the aged to starvation was sometimes forced upon them.

Death

The Gros Ventres valued life highly and prayed for long lives, but when a person knew he was about to die, it was said that he resigned himself and appreciated the efforts on the part of others to ease his last moments. There was a desire to die surrounded by one's family and friends who would see to it that the proper last steps were taken. In view of this, if a man were wounded in an encounter with the enemy, every effort would be made by his companions—even at great personal risk—to get him back to his family before he would die. 761 763 [727]

When all hope for life had been abandoned, the dying person was dressed in the best clothes available, his hair combed, and his face painted "as though he were going to a party." Frequently last minute instructions would be given by the dying concerning his preference as to method of final disposal. He might also include advice to his survivors, and make occasional bequests of 763

[9] It is interesting to note in this connection that Cocking, 1772, p. 112, writes of the Gros Ventres: "They torture all the aged of both sexes in a most shocking and deliberate manner." The context is not clear, however, and he may have been referring to treatment of prisoners of war.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

763 property.[4] Although in the following case ideal conditions did not obtain, the account as given by an old woman illustrates something of the attitudes which prevailed even after the Gros Ventres had settled down. "My husband had been ill. We were very badly off, having nothing to eat and no light, but worst of all my husband had no suitable clothes in which to pass his last moments. A friend of his fortunately came to the rescue, bringing new clothes, food, a fancy new lamp and fuel. A short time after this my husband called to me to come to him and said: 'I have lost life long ago. The only thing I have left is my eyesight. I can see, but I will be leaving you soon. Bring me the bundle my friend has given me.' I did so and as he examined the new clothing piece by piece he said: 'Now I am glad I shall have something to wear. I want you to listen carefully. I don't want you to mourn—we have too many children for that, and they must be cared for. Don't go to your relatives nor to mine. We have been very poor since I have been sick and none of them has even come to see us. I want you to go straight to the home of this man who has given me these clothes. Now I am ready to go.' After my husband [587] died, I did just as he had requested. In spite of all the gossip, I married that man. People were talking about me because that man had at one time been married to a wife of my mother's brother."

764 If circumstances did not permit arrangements to be made before death, as soon as possible after death the corpse was washed and dressed. This office was performed preferably by friends of the [572] deceased since it was not expected of near relatives because "they felt too bad." Should the deceased not own a proper outfit, one was usually somehow provided. Coming Daylight remembered that one time when a small boy was drowned, the child's distracted mother came running to her lodge saying: "I am very poor and my little boy has no good clothes to wear. Will you let me have your little boy's clothes?" Coming Daylight felt so sorry for this woman that she let her have her own son's nicely beaded clothes and moccasins, and gave her a blanket as well. After the body was dressed, they laid it on this blanket in the place of honor at the back of the parents' lodge.

[4] Kroeber, 1908, p. 180, notes that "A man often disposed of his property before death."

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Before closing this section on rational treatment of disease certain points on care of the sick may be added which have an indirect bearing on curative measures proper. 758

As a rule, the sick were well looked after by their relatives and friends. Encouraging words and hopeful good wishes were expressed to an ill person and these helped recovery. If the patient voiced a desire for any particular food this would be procured if possible. When on one occasion Singer's very ill husband expressed a wish for roseberries, an old man visiting him at the time rushed out, picked a big bunch of them and brought them back at once. Singer seeded, mashed them up and mixed them with tallow and set before her husband a bowlful of them which "he went after as if he were starved." The next day when some friends were visiting him he remarked: "I can't get enough of that roseberry soup." At this, one of them hastened out at once and brought back a large quantity. A little before this another friend had prayed at his bedside and wished him good luck. "Those prayers and that soup," added Singer, "seemed to bring him out of his illness. They made him strong." When Al Chandler's boy, Jimmy, had typhoid fever, and said he was hungry for plums, Mrs. Stevens went a long distance to procure them for him.

According to Al Chandler, "no matter how sick a person may be, there is always one rallying point, just before the end, when he wants to eat. When a person had no more chance to live, the Gros Ventres would fix him (or her) up, put on his best robes, and paint him up ready to die." [763]

Occasionally, in the old days, a sick person might be abandoned. 734
"The Gros Ventres," Coming Daylight recalled, "were moving southward across the Missouri River. Before crossing it they left behind a Gros Ventre woman and her two- or three-year-old girl baby. The woman was very ill. They left her and the baby in a little shelter. They sort of threw her away.

"Some time after that the Crow happened to travel that way and crossed the Missouri from the south at the same place. There they saw the baby walking around in the bush . . . she would eat roseberries and pick up grasshoppers and eat them after breaking off their legs. The woman in the shelter had died and was beginning to smell.